

Contributed

THE CALL.

Wide is the field, but the harvest is spoiling,
For lack of assistance from you and from me.
Come e'er the heat of the noonday be falling,
And gather the sheaves for eternity.

Bright o'er the field the sunlight is streaming,
Work is abundant but laborers are few;
Why all this languor, and why all this dreaming?
Awake! for the Master is calling for you.

—John Richard Moreland.

PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

By Rev. R. L. Benn.

In the Westminster Assembly, it is related that the members kept little books, in which they noted arguments to be answered, or heads of speeches to be made. In that renowned body there was a man of whom little had been heard, and of whom little was expected, for he was not large, nor was his presence commanding. But again and again, he startled those erudite sages with addresses so marvelous in power, so adroit in ingenuity, so convincing in logic, that contemporaneous history thrilled with his influence. Some charged that he had gathered his help from outside sources, that he had filled his book with thoughts from other brains, and that this was indeed the secret of his skill and success. When the sessions concluded, he was asked for a glimpse into the little book, and when the well-worn volume was opened, lo, instead of arguments and reasons and illustrations, they found such expressions as these: "O Lord, vouchsafe us light this day"; "O Divine Master, give us thine assistance"; "O Lord, glorify thyself through us thy servants"; "O Christ, defend against all enemies thine own cause." That was all.

Fact of Experience.

Here is a fact of Christian experience. It invites thoughtful consideration at a time when the fine physique and commanding presence are idolized; when conventions and machinery are unduly stressed; when the atmosphere is putrescent with skepticism; when many are bewildered by doubts and persist in turning to wretched sources for help and light on perplexing questions. Here is a soul which turned to God with the prayer for help and guidance, and here is the gracious answer in spiritual illumination and insight by the Spirit of God bearing testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus. This is the mission of the Spirit. The dispensation of inspiration is gone. The Spirit no longer inspires men, as he did Isaiah and Paul, so as to render them the infallible organs of God. Inspiration ceased when the last word of the New Testament was written; but the dispensation of spiritual illumination is coterminous with that of the Spirit. And the dispensation of the Spirit is indeed the only assurance of the continuance of spiritual religion.

Two-Fold Privilege.

It is a personal privilege accorded the truth-seeker, or the doubter, or the perplexed to pray for spiritual illumination, and guidance into the truth. The Holy Spirit is promised to convince of sin and error and guide such to the truth which Jesus taught for salva-

tion. "He shall guide you into all the truth." It is not said that the Spirit will guide into every species of truth; for philosophic and scientific truth must be obtained by the intellectual processes of observation and comparison, judgment and induction; and yet, even here, to one who humbly and prayerfully acknowledges God at every step in the path of inquiry, spiritual help comes. Copernicus and Newton and Kepler, who have made such splendid contributions to the scientific knowledge of the world were praying men, and were certainly guided by the Holy Spirit. But the promise relates particularly and directly to the truth for personal salvation. This is the mission of the Spirit. He constitutes the tie, and bond of connection, between the distressed soul of man and the truth of Christ. The darkness of unbelief breaks up and the blinding mist of doubt scatters under the Spirit's enlightening influence and empowering the soul to the act of faith in Christ's person and work and promise of hope. And such men as Brainerd and Edwards and Spencer and Martyn, and scores of others who passed through seasons of spiritual gloom reached this experience of divine truth when they betook themselves to God, and the Holy Spirit led them into the truth which, "like the sun in its glory sweetly diffused light and life."

"Holy Ghost, with light divine,
Shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away,
Turn my darkness into day."

It is the Christian's privilege to pray likewise for others. By prayer one can as really touch hearts which are distant, even in far off Africa and India, as if one were there. Prayer puts one in touch with the Holy Spirit who is omnipresent and whose power is exerted upon mankind, so that one may be "present at the objective point of prayer." Thus one may give light on the printed page as some Hottentot reads it, or give gracious eloquence to the teacher or preacher, or make it easier for some soul to accept the story of Christ, or open prison doors that the captive may step out into the glorious spiritual freedom of the gospel. Living under the dispensation of the Spirit, it is one's privilege to expect and claim for oneself, and for others, all that Jesus promised in behalf of the Advocate and Comforter. It is not permitted one to know what soul, whether near or remote, is tarrying for the prayerful solicitude of God's people with the silent appeal—

"Pray for my soul.

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Therefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me, night and day."

Holding the Heights.

The spiritual heights attained by prayer are held by no less a means. There can be no substitute. Conventions and Conferences enliven one's enthusiasm; revival meetings quicken one's fervor and zeal; but by prayer comes the power to hold the spiritual heights and retain the vision. It is related by George Adam Smith that, with the assistance of a guide, he once climbed the heights of Weishorn which overlook the glorious valley of Zermatt. After hours spent in laborious climbing they reached the summit. In the exhilaration of his achievement he leaped upon